

Case Study: From Alcoholic to Workaholic

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Abstract— *The least liked part of their job for supervisors, managers and executives are dealing with employee performance issues. This includes performance appraisals, monitoring, discipline, and termination. Because of the dislike for this part of their job, many managers ignore problems and issues with employees until they become so severe. Some managers never deal with the problems. They push off the problem to someone else or they themselves leave for a different job. So, what do supervisors, managers, and executives do when faced with "problem employees"? There are six solutions offered to solve the problem. (1) Deal with employee problems promptly. (2) Get help from others. (3) Learn how to do "progressive discipline. (4) Set a good example and teach others what you expect. (5) Stay up-to-date on laws, union regulations, and personnel policies. (6) When faced with a difficult situation, feel the fear and press forward anyway. While discipline and termination are not pleasant tasks, there are many options for dealing with them early that can turn the situation into a win/win for both the manager and the employee. There are many other reasons why organizations should improve key decisions. More positively, there are new insights, technologies, and methods that can guide decisions. Scientific advances in neuroscience and behavioral economics provide new insights for decision-making. Relatively, new technologies, including analytics, decision automation tools, and business intelligence systems, make it possible to make better use of information in decisions. 'Wisdom of crowds' approaches and technologies allow larger groups of people to participate meaningfully in decision processes. Organizations cannot afford to ignore these new options if they wish to make the best possible decisions.*

In this case, the writer wishes to implement alternative solutions which state: get help from others, and set a good example and teach others what you expect. These are considered the highest value option and therefore will provide the most optimal result which is a win-win solution. This case study is related to a problematic employee dealt with the management who later became an asset to the organization.

Keywords— *Alcoholic, Case Study, Management Issues, Philippines, Workaholic*

I. INTRODUCTION

Management comprises planning, organizing, staffing, directing and controlling an organization or effort for the purpose of accomplishing a goal. Resourcing encompasses the deployment and manipulation of human resources, financial resources, technological resources and natural resources. A boss or manager is the one who handles, controls and directs a business and other enterprises. He identifies visions, goals, and priorities of the business. He controls the resources and expenditures of a household. His subordinates or employees contribute labor, expertise and perform discrete activities of the economic production. They are being recognized and rewarded fairly for their achievement (<http://www.answers.com/topic/manager>).

In an office, employees are assigned to their respective duties, responsibilities and various tasks are given by their manager in a small room or cubicle where they spend most of the time working from Monday to Friday at 8:00 A.M. to 5:00 P.M. or four times a week. Some workers consider the office as their second home. They build a strong good working relationship and a sense of belonging to a team member of the organization.

Some workers develop a social and personal relationship as well where they find future husbands and wives, while others take pride in getting their work done with positive feedback. The strong emotional bond between the management and employees creates and maintains versatile engagement to the environment where they can work in a successful, peaceful and harmonious way. In a school or college institution, as a President or person of authority, it is his/her moral obligation to implement policies and regulations of the school (<http://education.yahoo.com/reference/dictionary/entry/office>).

According to Douglas Mc Gregor, he identified 2 sets of assumptions, theory X, and Y. Theory X indicates the traditional view of human nature. It assumes that most people inherently dislike work, avoid responsibility, and

have little ambition. Thus, managerial action should be the aim at counteracting these tendencies. Organizational goals will be achieved through direction, control, and coercion. Theory Y, on the other hand, assumes that dislike of the work, avoidance of the responsibility and lack of ambition are not inherent human characteristics. Instead, they are generally the consequences of experiences. Under the proper conditions, most people learn to accept and seek responsibility. They have the potential to exercise a relatively high degree of imagination, ingenuity, and creativity. Thus, the managerial strategy is to create an environment where people can develop and release their potential toward organization goals.

In Herzberg's Motivation-Hygiene Theory, it conducted studies and interviews in which employees were asked if they are pleased and displeased with their work. Leading to dissatisfaction are company policy, supervision, and relationship with a boss. There are also items leading to satisfaction like achievement, recognition, and growth. Because of this theory leading to dissatisfaction, some employees make an expected action to voice out their attention, they do not obey the policies.

This study focuses on a private employee who committed an offense, BEING ALCOHOLIC, who was not subjected to disciplinary action, and, as you go through the content, you will wonder why.

II. THE CASE

2.1 Background Information

When I was a young manager — young in age and experience — I was blessed to have some difficult challenges presented to me and some very good coaches and mentors who helped me deal with them. I have to admit that at that time, I had a much less philosophical view about managing people.

2.2 Development of the Case

I once had an employee I'll call Jane (not her real name). Jane had been an excellent project manager and I had worked on her projects before she became my employee. Jane was a mentor to me and was twice my age; I had great respect for her skills and talents.

Sometime later, I occasionally thought I noticed the smell of alcohol when I talked with her. I ignored it and thought "maybe it was my imagination." One day, one of my other employees who shared an office with Jane came storming into my office saying, "You have to do something about Jane." I asked what was going on and he told me that he regularly noticed that she seems to be unsteady on her feet,

she "reeked" of alcohol and she didn't seem to be doing anything at all some days.

Now, I was stuck. I had to do something - but, what? I also felt great internal conflict because I was so young and had such great respect for Jane, how could I question her about her performance or tell her what to do? I went to the library and bookstores (this was before the Internet) and tried to learn about employee performance issues. I read that there actually is a good process to follow for dealing with alcohol problems in the workplace. I met with our Personnel Department and we developed a plan.

Next, I met with my department head and told him what I was planning to do and got his support. Then, I scheduled a meeting with Jane. It went something like this:

Me: Jane, I've noticed that you are not getting your work done as well as you used to. I've sometimes noticed that smells like alcohol when I talk with you. I have spoken with our Personnel Department about what options I have. I can fire you for non-performance or we can walk over to the Personnel Department and they can enroll you in our Employee Assistance Program (EAP) and see if that can help get your work back up to your usual good quality. Are you willing to go to Personnel Department with me?

Jane: Yes, I will go to Personnel Department with you.

We went directly to the Personnel Office right then (they were expecting us). The personnel officer also explained that she could be terminated for bad performance or she could enroll in a program that would help her. Jane agreed to enroll in the program. At that point, I only knew that she planned to enroll. The EAP program is confidential so if she had quit the program, I would not have known.

After a few weeks, we began to see an improvement in Jane's work. She no longer appeared to "reek" of alcohol and seemed steadier. A short while later, she thanked me for helping her get into the program and told me that she was committed to following through on the program. Jane quit drinking and her work went back up to its previous high quality and she eventually left for a much higher paying job.

It is interesting that for alcohol issues, there is a specified course of action to take that works and we followed that. For other types of employee issues, there is not a strict "to do" plan that always works.

Certainly, not all the employee issues I've faced were as successful as this one. I have had to fire employees, or in personnel lingo — "terminate" them. It was never easy and I learned a lot about myself in the process that I hope made me a better manager, leader, coach, and management consultant.

III. ANALYSIS

3.1 Problem

This problem turns an egregious action by an employee who became motivated after enrolling in the employee assistance program and made her better. Too many managers throw up their hands when faced with serious progressive discipline issues or really difficult employees. Resist the feeling to do that! When an employee is first hired, managers must make sure they are properly trained and given reasonable expectations that they agree to. Most companies have some type of probation period where employees can be terminated more easily than if they are long-term employees. The manager must monitor new employees during their first few weeks and months, not just sit them at a desk or a machine and "hope" they will learn the job on their own. Sometimes, managers bring a new employee to a team and expect the team to train the new employee. That works well in some companies and is a dismal failure in others, depending on the workplace culture. It is still the manager's responsibility to make sure that the employee is getting the right type of orientation and training. It is the manager who will need to do discipline if that becomes required.

If there are signs during the probation period that an employee isn't performing as expected, do not delay and do not ignore the warning signs. Start paying strict attention to what is happening with the employee and take action early to avoid small problems from becoming big problems. Many employees who make mistakes at the early stages can be coached toward the right path and will go on to fully develop in the job. However, if left alone, they may be heading down a path that eventually will get them in trouble. If the employee cannot be coached early on toward your desired goals, let them go. Employee issues are like bad apples - they will contaminate your entire workgroup if left alone. You will lose the good employees (or their willingness to work hard) and be left with a bunch of rotten apples.

3.1 Alternative Solutions

The least liked part of their job for supervisors, managers and executives are dealing with employee performance issues. This includes performance appraisals, monitoring, discipline, and termination. Because of the dislike for this part of their job, many managers ignore problems and issues with employees until they become so severe to deal with. Some managers never deal with the problems. They push off the problem to someone else or they themselves leave for a different job. So, what do supervisors, managers, and executives do when faced with "problem

employees"? There are six solutions offered to solve the problem.

(1) Deal with employee problems promptly.

First of all, don't ignore the problem thinking it will go away. It won't. In fact, it will get worse and other good employees will lose respect for the manager. If ignored too long, the good employees will leave and you will be left with only the "problems." I'm sure some people reading this article are nodding their head and know what I'm saying — either for them or they have seen it happen to others. Make sure you have the facts and are not reacting simply to rumor or someone's "story" about what happened. Give the employee a chance to give their side of the situation and listen to their issues and concerns with an open mind. If you can turn around a problem employee for the better, everyone wins.

(2) Get help from others.

Your company's Personnel (or Human Resources) Department often has resources to assist you. They can explain what your options are: progressive discipline, probation, firing, retraining, performance monitoring techniques, etc.

For some issues — such as alcohol, drugs, family stresses — Employee Assistance Programs (EAP) may be able to help the employee come to grips with issues that may be affecting their work performance. Also, ask peer managers if they can offer suggestions. Ask people in your professional network or business associations for suggestions. Sometimes, conflicts between employees and managers are simply incompatible personalities or working styles. Or, maybe the employee is a bad fit for the particular job they are in. Sometimes, discussions with other managers in your company will reveal someone who might be interested in working with the "problem" employee and a transfer can be considered that will result in a 'win/win' for everyone.

(3) Learn how to do "progressive discipline"

Progressive discipline means that the manager must develop a detailed plan of work-related performance expectations and meet with the employee to gain agreement that they both will participate in changing their work experience. The plan must include expected actions by the employee and manager. The manager must work closely with upper management and personnel/human resources so they know what is happening and can support any further actions that may need to be taken.

There are few examples of the steps used in the progressive discipline, these are: (1) Verbal coaching session with the employee where you identify the issue of concern and work out a plan how to resolve it. Start a log with a detailed description of your verbal discussion with the employee. (2) Written warning or reprimand letter is done if the verbal coaching session did not produce the desired work results and/or the employee did not change their work in the agreed upon way. The letter goes in the employee's personnel file. The letter must clearly identify what was expected and what did or did not happen. The employee receives a copy of the letter. (3) Probation may be required for some period of time so that you can closely monitor the employee's performance. The employee must clearly understand that if their work performance does not improve they are subject to suspension or termination. (4) Suspension can be used for serious offenses where immediate action is required — either for an egregious action by the employee, for continued lack of performance, during an investigation or for other reasons. (5) Termination (firing) the employee is the highest level resulting in the employee losing their job. If unions are involved, the manager may need to consult with the shop steward and/or the employee may have specific rights built into the union agreement that must be adhered to. There are often timelines that must be followed strictly if the manager is heading toward more discipline or termination. Progressive discipline means that the manager must follow-up and follow-through consistently with the employee. They must also monitor the work of other employees so that one person is not being singled out for harsher treatment than others.

(4) Set a good example and teach others what you expect. Make sure your employees know what is important to you — by your actions as well as your words. If you regularly come in late and leave early, don't expect your employees to be punctual every day and work hard if you are not willing to show them that you are willing to do the same. If you expect teamwork, then you need to be a good example of a good team player. If you expect employees to get along, you must be someone who gets along with others. If there are workload issues or other challenges in your job, ask employees for their ideas about how to resolve them. The creativity of employees is amazing if only people take the time to get them involved in solving problems. Use your employees' ideas if you can. If you can't, explain why it won't work this time, encourage them to continue to bring ideas to you and to work with you in solving challenges. And, just to make sure we don't miss

the obvious things: treat your entire employee with respect and dignity. Reward them for a job well done. Acknowledge them when they perform well. Encourage them when they try, even if their efforts are not completely successful. Listen to their ideas.

(5) Stay up-to-date on laws, union regulations, and personnel policies.

The world of work is changing rapidly. There are many articles being written about the "X" generation or the "Web 2.0" generation. Different age groups have different expectations. Different cultural groups may have different expectations. Managers need to be aware of how the world of work is changing. Employees are no longer willing to simply "take orders" at work. They want to participate in decisions that affect them. They expect to be treated with respect and dignity. They know they can get another job if this one doesn't work out. Many employees are less willing to do whatever it takes, just for a paycheck. They are more interested in the quality of life — by their definition — which may not be the same as your definition.

(6) When faced with a difficult situation, feel the fear and press forward anyway.

Few managers enjoy the discipline portion of their job. Firing people is not what managers talk about when asked what they like about their job. It is a fact of life that employee performance monitoring, discipline and dealing with employee issues are part of a manager's job — it actually defines what a manager is: someone who has the authority to hire, fire and discipline.

You are not alone in facing whatever management problems or employee issues you are facing. Someone somewhere has been through it before. Seek them out. Ask for help. Search the Internet. Ask your peers for help in dealing with tough issues. Ask professionals for help. Ask your own management for their wisdom and guidance. Learn from your mistakes and the mistakes of others. I've sure made my share of mistakes and the experience has made me stronger and a better manager.

"What doesn't kill you, makes you stronger" is something I've had to remind myself of and others as well many times.

3.3 Decision

While discipline and termination are not pleasant tasks, there are many options for dealing with them early that can turn the situation into a win/win for both the manager and the employee.

There are many other reasons why organizations should improve key decisions. More positively, there are new insights, technologies, and methods that can guide decisions. Scientific advances in neuroscience and behavioral economics provide new insights for decision-making.

Relatively, new technologies, including analytics, decision automation tools, and business intelligence systems, make it possible to make better use of information in decisions. 'Wisdom of crowds' approaches and technologies allow larger groups of people to participate meaningfully in decision processes. Organizations cannot afford to ignore these new options if they wish to make the best possible decisions.

In this case, the writer wishes to implement alternative solutions numbers 2 and 4. These are considered the highest value option and therefore will provide the most optimal result which is a win-win solution.

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